

This document will give you information about a liver biopsy. If you have any questions, you should ask your GP or other relevant health professional.

What is a liver biopsy?

A liver biopsy involves removing small pieces of tissue from your liver using a needle. The procedure is performed by a radiologist (doctor who specialises in x-rays and scans).

What are the benefits of a liver biopsy?

A liver biopsy can help your doctor to find out if there is a problem with your liver, such as inflammation (hepatitis), cirrhosis or a tumour.

Are there any alternatives to a liver biopsy?

A blood test or scan may show that you have a problem. However, a biopsy will help to find out exactly what is causing the problem and will help your doctor to decide the best treatment for you.

What does the procedure involve?

• Ultrasound-guided liver biopsy

Your doctor will make a small cut on the skin on your right side, usually between your lower ribs. They will insert the needle through the cut and into your liver to remove a small piece of tissue (see figure 1). They will often use an ultrasound scan to guide them while they perform the biopsy.

• Transjugular liver biopsy

Your doctor will make a small cut on your skin on the right side of your neck and then insert a catheter (tube) into your jugular vein. They will use x-rays to help them guide the tube through your veins. When the tube reaches your liver, your doctor will pass a needle down the tube to remove a small piece of tissue.

What complications can happen?

- Pain
- Bleeding
- Inflammation of the lining of your abdomen
- Making a hole in nearby structures with the needle
- Allergic reaction
- Infection

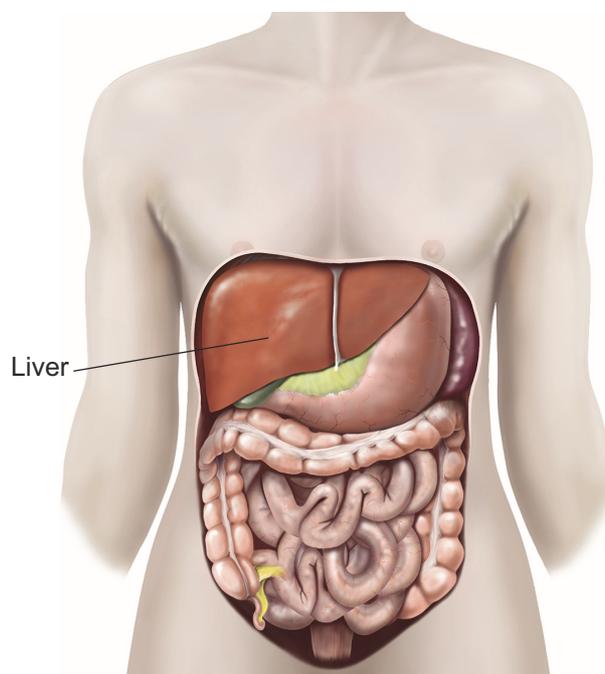


Figure 1
The position of the liver

How soon will I recover?

You should be able to go home the same day. You should be able to return to work the next day unless you are told otherwise. Do not do strenuous exercise for one to two days. The healthcare team will discuss with you any treatment or follow-up you need.

Summary

A liver biopsy is usually a safe and effective way of finding out if there is a problem with your liver.

Acknowledgements

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